



ΟΙ ΔΡΟΜΟΙ ΤΗΣ ΓΝΩΣΗΣ



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Kapodistrian  
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Athens



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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, CULTURE & SPORTS  
MANAGING AUTHORITY

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# The History of Greek Literature

Summer Schools for Greek children, children from European high Schools and from Schools in America, Australia and Asia

The project "Academy of Plato: Development of Knowledge and innovative ideas" is co-financed from National and European funds through the Operational Programme "Education and Lifelong Learning"

# EPIC POETRY

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- Epos (meaning “word” “logos” from the verb έπω= λέγω) is a narrative poem.
- It narrates heroic deeds of human and gods.
- It can also have a didactic context.

# HEROIC EPOS, 8<sup>th</sup> cent. BC

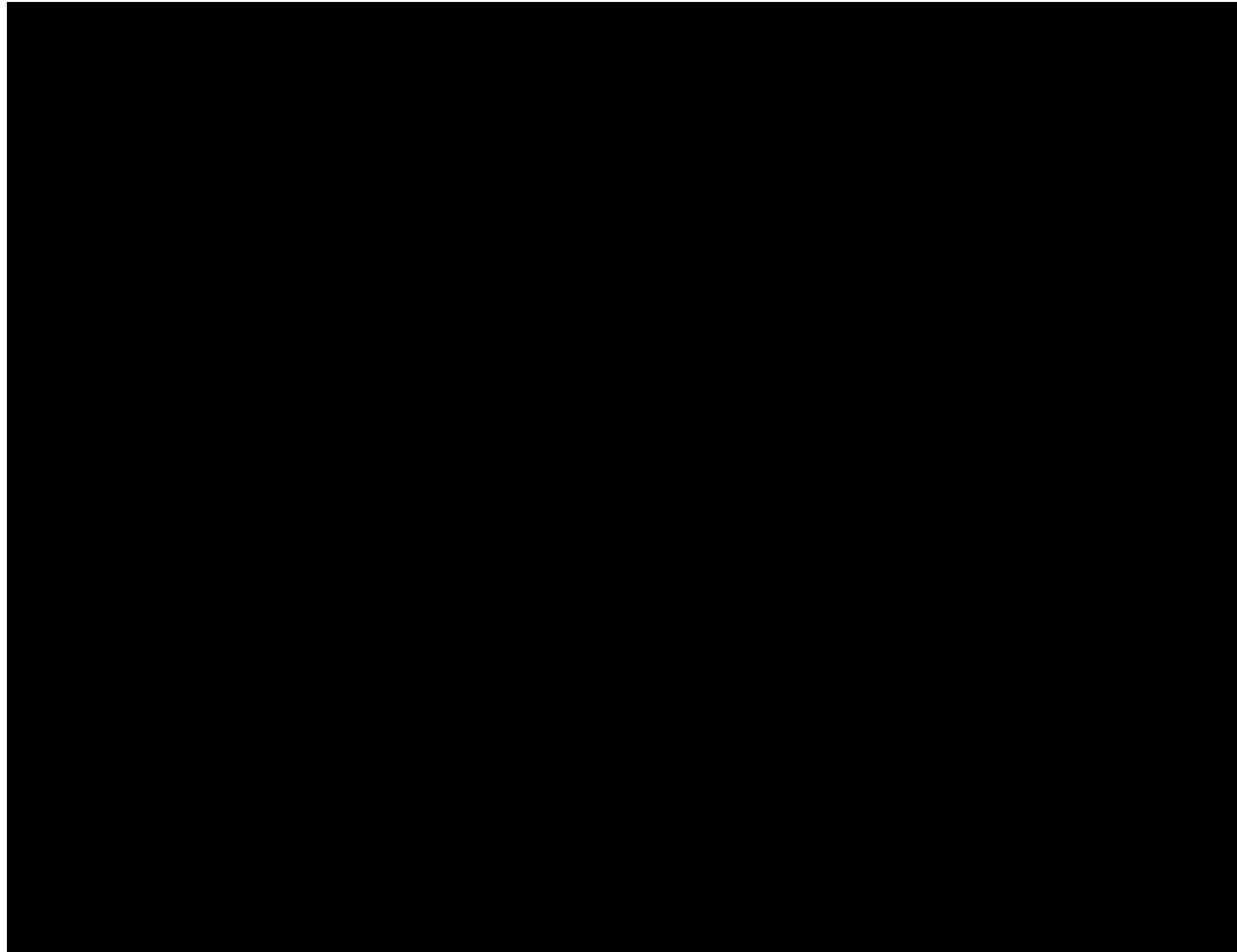
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## Homer

- *Iliad*: On the occasion of the “menis” (the anger) of Achilles, it portrays the war of the Greeks against the Trojans.
- *Odyssey*: it is referred to the adventures of Odysseus in his return home after the fall of Troy.

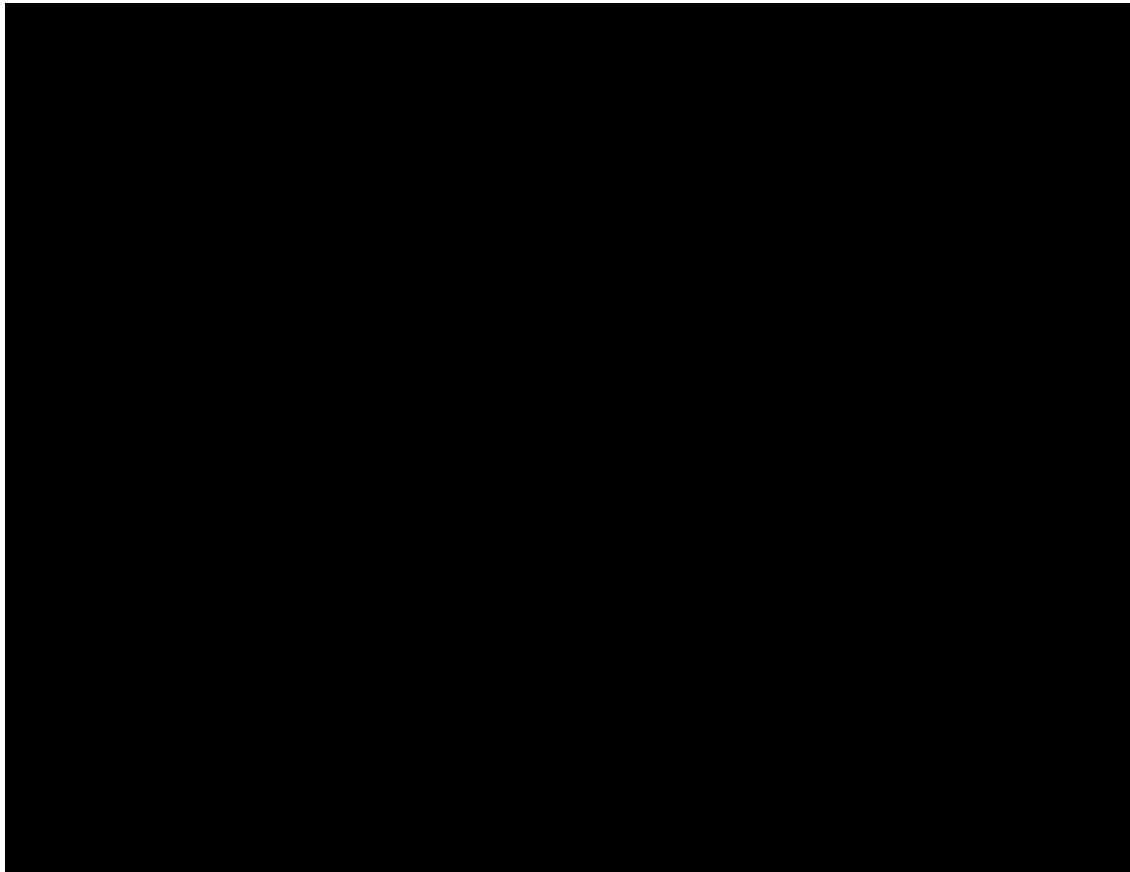
# HOMER, Iliad

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# HOMER, *Odyssey*

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# DIDACTIC EPOS, 8<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BC

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## Hesiod

*Theogonia*: about the birth of the gods.

*Works and Days*: on the occasion of his dispute with his brother, the poet refers to matters of everyday life and human relations.

# LYRIC POETRY, MID. 6<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BC

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- Lyric poetry abandons the heroic character of the epic poetry.
- It is rather a personal poetry.
- The poet expresses his personal feelings.
- It refers to problems and situations of his time, especially of his personal life.

# LYRIC POETRY, MID. 6<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BC

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The subjects of Lyric poetry covers all the aspects of human life.

- **Religious life:** hymn, paeon, dithyramb.
- **National life:** Emvaterion (march), epinikion, encomium.
- **Political life:** elegy, iamb.
- **Personal life:** Scolion (symposium songs), erotic, Hemenaios (wedding songs), Threnos.



# LYRIC POETRY, MID. 6<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BC

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- Lyric poetry was sang either by one person either by a group, accompanied at first by lyre (i.e. lyric) and then by other instruments, like the flute, the guitar or the Phorminx.

# MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

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*Flute*



*Phorminx*

# GENRES OF LYRIC POETRY

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- **Elegy** Mimnermus, Theognis, Solon, Tyrtaeus
- **Iamb** Archilochus, Simonides of Amorgos
- **Epigram** Simonides of Ceos
- **Melos** Terpander, Alcaeus, Sappho
- **Choral poetry** Alcman, Pindar, Stesichorus

# SAPPHO, *Κέλομαί σε Γογγύλα*

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# CLASSICAL PERIOD

## Drama

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- **Tragedy:** Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides.
- **Comedy:** Aristophanes.
- **Satyric Drama.**

# CLASSICAL PERIOD

## Historiography

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### **Herodotus (around 485-425)**

- His work *Histories* is divided in nine books, named after the nine muses.
- The subject of his work is the war between Greeks and Persians, but at the same time he gives a geographical, ethnological, political and cultural review of ancient times.

# CLASSICAL PERIOD

## Historiography

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### **Thucydides (around 460- 399)**

- His work recounts the events of the first twenty years of the Peloponnesian War (431-411)
- He attempts to give a profound analysis of the causes of the war, as well as an analysis of human nature, aiming at providing the next generations with a “ktema es aei” (an everlasting possession).

# CLASSICAL PERIOD

## Historiography

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- **Xenophon** completes the history of the Peloponnesian war after 411 BC, but he is also a prolific writer. He has written numerous historical, philosophical and didactical works.



# CLASSICAL PERIOD

## Rhetoric

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- Democratic institutions as well as the justice system, especially in the city of Athens, both contribute to the development of rhetorical speech.

# CLASSICAL PERIOD

## Historiography

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- Deliberative or political speeches. They are delivered in the Popular Assembly. The most famous orator of this genre is **Demosthenes**.
- Forensic or Judicial speeches. They are delivered in Courts. The most famous orator of this genre is **Lysias**.
- Epideictic or Ceremonial speeches. They are delivered in public events or celebrations. The most famous orator of this genre is **Isocrates**.

# CLASSICAL PERIOD

## Philosophy

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- In this period Philosophy reaches its heyday.
- The reflection of the Pre-Socratic Philosophers on issues about the beginning of the world, of the Sophists on issues about man and society, of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle about politics and ethics gave unsurpassed pieces of work.

# HELLENISTIC PERIOD

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- The institution of city-state weakens. Men now live in immense states ruled by absolute monarchs. Hellenistic poetry has, thus, a new content. The poets reminisce with nostalgia the nature and emphasize personal experience.

# HELLENISTIC PERIOD

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- **Callimachus** (305-240 BC). He writes philological treatises, lyric and didactic poetry, influenced by Hesiod.
- **Theocritus**. He works on a new poetic genre, bucolic poetry. His «Idylls» present in the form of dialogue scenes of an idealized pastoral life.

# NEW COMEDY

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- In the Hellenistic period, Comedy flourishes again. New Comedy is not, however, a political satire. The plays are mainly “comedies of manners”. They present human types of everyday life.
- The main representative was Menander (342-290).

# ROMAN EMPIRE

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- **Plutarch** (50-120 AD)

His 120 works are divided in two categories:

«Parallel Lives» They are a series of biographies arranged in pairs, each of them containing the life of one famous Greek person and one Roman.

«Moralia» This is a collection of treatises about ethical, philosophical, political and religious issues.

- **Arrianus** ( 90-175 AD) He wrote philosophical, historical, geographical and military works. One of his most important works is the «Anabasis of Alexander», an account of the Alexander's campaign from its start until his death.

# ARRIANUS, *Αλεξάνδρου Ανάβασις*

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# PAUSANIAS

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**Pausanias (2<sup>nd</sup> cent. AD).** He writes geographic history. In his work *Description of Greece* (*Ελλάδος Περιήγησις*) divided in ten volumes, he describes the places and ancient monuments he visited, combining his personal experiences with mythological and historical digressions.

# PHILOSOPHY-RHETORIC

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- The conjunction of philosophy and rhetoric leads to the movement of the **Second Sophistic**. This movement puts forward the Greek culture in the Roman times.

# PHILOSOPHY-RHETORIC

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- **Lucian** 120-180 AD.
- In his Dialogues, he lampoons relentlessly the Olympian Gods, the teaching of Philosophers, the deceit of the Orators, the human weakness.

# BYZANTINE LITERATURE

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- Pre-byzantine or Christian literature emerged under the influence of Christianity in the Greek East until the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD.
- Dominant figures are the three “Cappadocian fathers”, **Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom.**

# JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

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# BYZANTINE LITERATURE

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- In poetry, ecclesiastic hymnography predominates.

**Romanos Melodos**, composes his hymns in the 6<sup>th</sup> century Ad.

# ROMANOS MELODOS

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# BYZANTINE LITERATURE 10<sup>th</sup> cent.-1204

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- Folk poetry (Δημοτικά τραγούδια) (Akritika, Paraloges, social and historical poems)
- Chronicles
- Historiography
- *Ptochoprodromika*
- *Epic of Digenes Akritas*



# The death of Digenis Acritas (A cretan variant)

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Digenis is struggling with death and the earth shudders.

The sky is filled with thunder and lightning,  
the upper world shakes,  
the nether world has opened and its  
foundations creak.

And the trembling tombstone wonders how to  
cover him,

how to cover the brave eagle of the world.

No house could put a roof over his head, no  
cave could hold him;

he strode across the hills, he leapt over the  
mountain tops,

he played quoits with boulders, he shook loose  
deep-rooted rocks;

he jumped so high that he caught the birds,  
the falcon on the wing;

he jumped and ran faster than the deer or the  
wild beast.

Death was envious and from a distant  
ambush watched him,  
and wounded him in the heart, snatching  
away his soul.



# BYZANTINE LITERATURE 1204-1453

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- Threnoi
- Chronicles
- Verse romances (Ιπποτικά μυθιστορήματα)

# CRETAN LITERATURE

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- In Crete, during the period of Venetian rule (until 1669), magnificent literary works are written.
- Theater: Erophili of G. Chortatsis, The sacrifice of Abraham of V. Kornaros
- Verse romance: Erotokritos of V. Kornaros



# ΕΡΩΦΙΛΗ



Sketch by Yannis Tsarouchis for a stage design of Erophili, 1937.

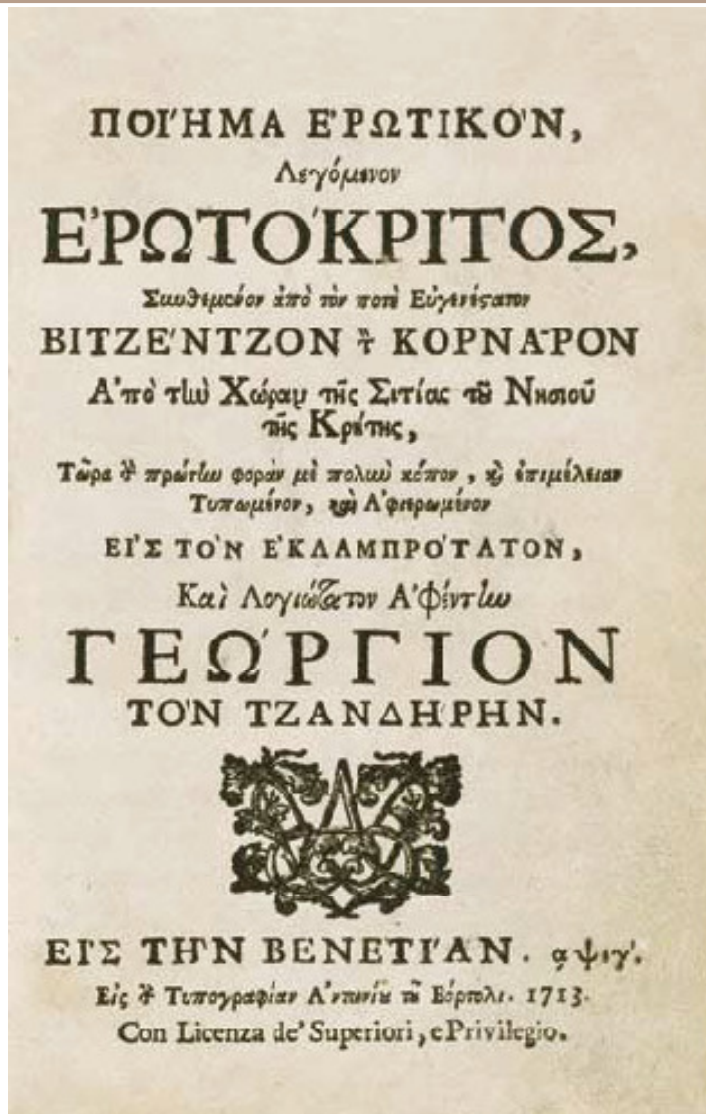
Program from a production of Erophili at the theatre of Karolos Koun, 1934.

# EROPHILI

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# EROTOKRITOS



Theophilos Hadjimichail, *Erotokritos and Aretousa*, c. 1930. (Private collection)

The oldest surviving edition of *Erotokritos*. Title-page of Antonio Bortoli's edition of 1713. (Gennadius Library, Athens)

# EROTOKRITOS

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## 18<sup>th</sup> century

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- This is the time of the Greek Enlightenment. During this period, the are made for the cultural and national renaissance. **Athanasios Christopoulos, Rigas Pheraios and Ioannes Vilaras** are considered as “forerunners” for their important role in the promotion of education and the development of the demotic language.



# RIGAS PHERAIOS



# RIGAS PHERAIOS

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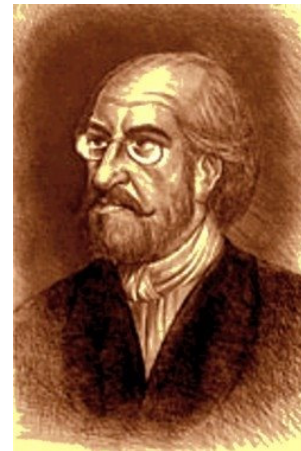
For how long, lads, we shall  
spread our lives in straits  
alone, like the lions, to  
mountains and crests?  
To leave inside caves , the  
branches all we see  
to leave from this world, all  
for the bitter chain?  
To lose brothers and  
parents, country and friends,  
all our relatives and children  
as well?  
It' s better if for an hour we  
live our life free  
than living forty years in  
bondage and in jail (being  
unfree)!



# 1821-1880

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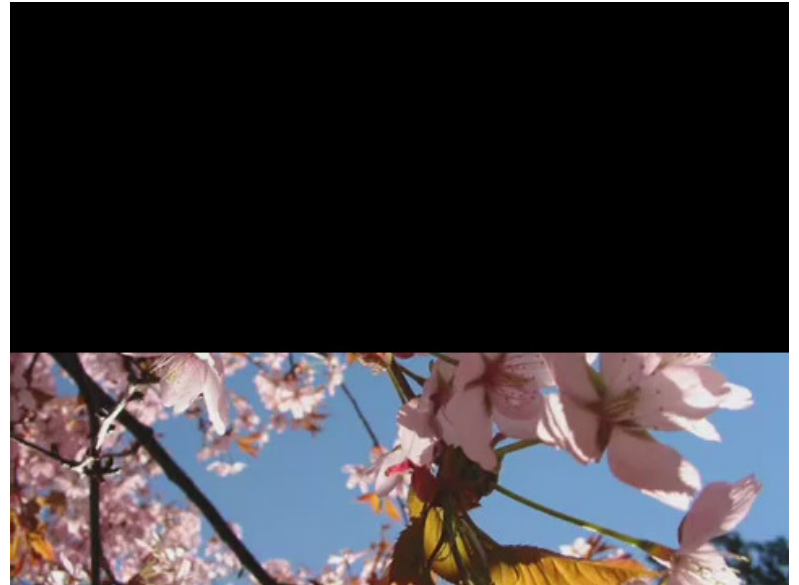
- The Greek Revolution of 1821 influenced greatly the Greek literature of the first period of the New Kingdom of Greece.
- In the 1820's, the first poems about the Revolution were written by two Eptanesians, **D. Solomos** (Hymn to Liberty, 1823) and **A. Kalvos** (Lyra, 1824, Lyrica, 1826).



## D. SOLOMOS, Temptation

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*Eros and April linked hand in hand began to dance with joy,  
And Nature found her greatest and her sweetest hour:  
Out of swelling shadows enfolding dew and scent came  
A most exquisite melody, languorous, soft, and faint.  
Water clear and sweet, full of charm and of magic  
Flows and pours itself into a fragrant abyss,  
Taking the perfume with it, leaving coolness behind,  
Showing to the sun all the wealth of its sources.  
It runs here and there and sings like a nightingale.  
But over the water of the lake, that is still and white  
Still wherever you look at it, all-white to the bottom,  
With a little, unknown shadow a butterfly plays,  
That amid fragrance had slept inside a wild lily.  
My seer, light-of-shadow, tell us what you saw tonight:  
"A. night full of miracles, a most enchanted night!  
There was no breeze stirring on earth, nor on sky or ocean,  
Not even as much as makes a bee brushing a tiny  
blossom.  
Around something motionless that glows in the lake  
The round face of the moon merges in close embrace,  
And a fair maiden comes forth dressed in its silver light.*



- In this period, **Elisabeth Moutzan-Martinegou**, the first Greek woman writer. Her most known work is “Autobiography”.
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# GREEK REVOLUTION, 1821

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- Heroes of the Revolution write their Memoirs.
- The Memoirs of General Makrygiannis are considered a masterpiece of Modern Greek Literature.



## MAKRYGIANNIS, Memoirs

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“I had two statues masterpieces, a woman and a prince, intact – even the veins were visible, that’s how perfect they were. When the destroyed Poros, some soldiers took the statues away and at Argos they would have sold them to some Europeans; they were asking for one thousand talers [...]. I took the soldiers aside and told them:

‘Even if they were to give you ten thousand talers, do not degrade yourselves by letting these statues leave our country. It was for them we fought’”

# 1880-1922

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During this period, there is an effort of renewal of the Greek State in the political, social and literary field.

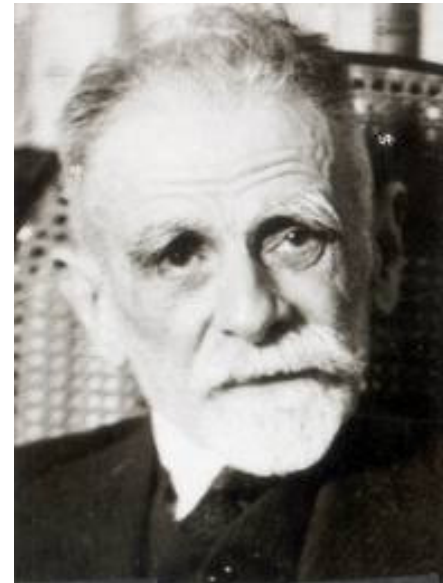
- New European movements, like Parnassianism, Symbolism, Realism and Naturalism, influence Greek writers.
- The development of the science of Folklore (Λαογραφία) lead to a thematic renewal of literary works.
- The demotic language is established, first in poetry and later to prose.



# POETRY 1880-1922

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- The most famous poet of this generation is **Kostis Palamas**, who predominated in Greek intellectual life for the next decades.



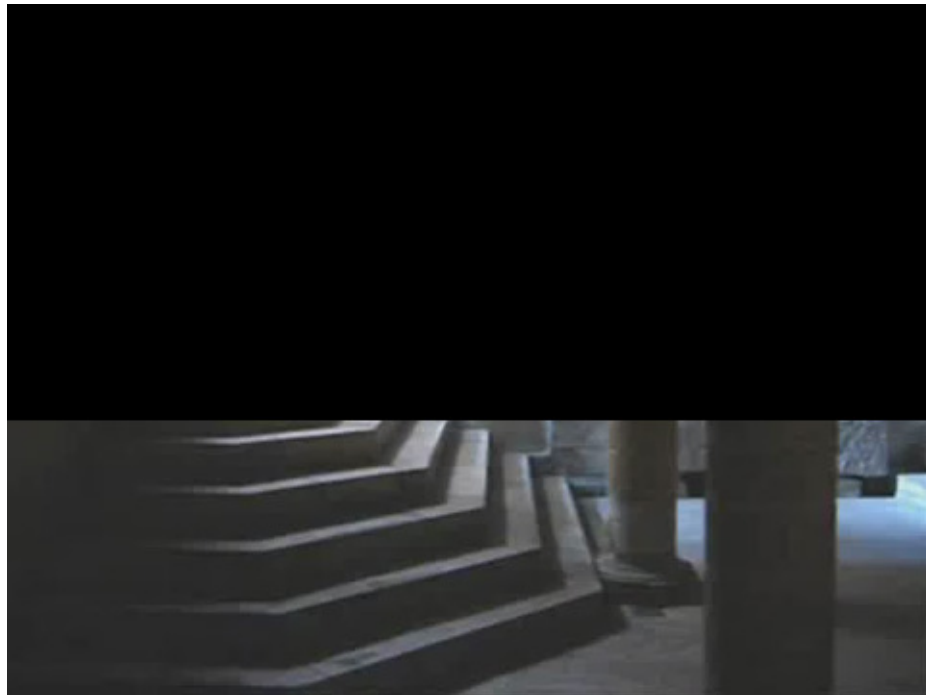
# KOSTIS PALAMAS, The Grave

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Tranquilly, silently,  
Thirsting for our kisses,  
Unknown you glided  
Into our bosom;  
Even the heavy winter  
Suddenly smiled  
Tranquilly, silently,  
But to receive you;  
Tranquilly, silently,  
The breeze caressed you,  
O Sunlight of Night  
And Dream of the Day;  
Tranquilly, silently,  
Our home was gladdened  
With sweetness of amber  
With your grace magnetic;  
Tranquilly, silently,  
Our home beheld you,  
Beauty of the morning star,  
Light of the star of evening;  
Tranquilly, silently,

Little moons, mouth and eyes,  
One dawn you vanished  
Upon a cruel deathbed;  
Tranquilly, silently,  
In spite of all our kisses,  
Away you wandered

Torn from our bosom;  
Tranquilly, silently,  
O word, O verse, O rime,  
Your witherless flowers  
Sow on his grave faith-shaking.



# POETRY 1880-1922

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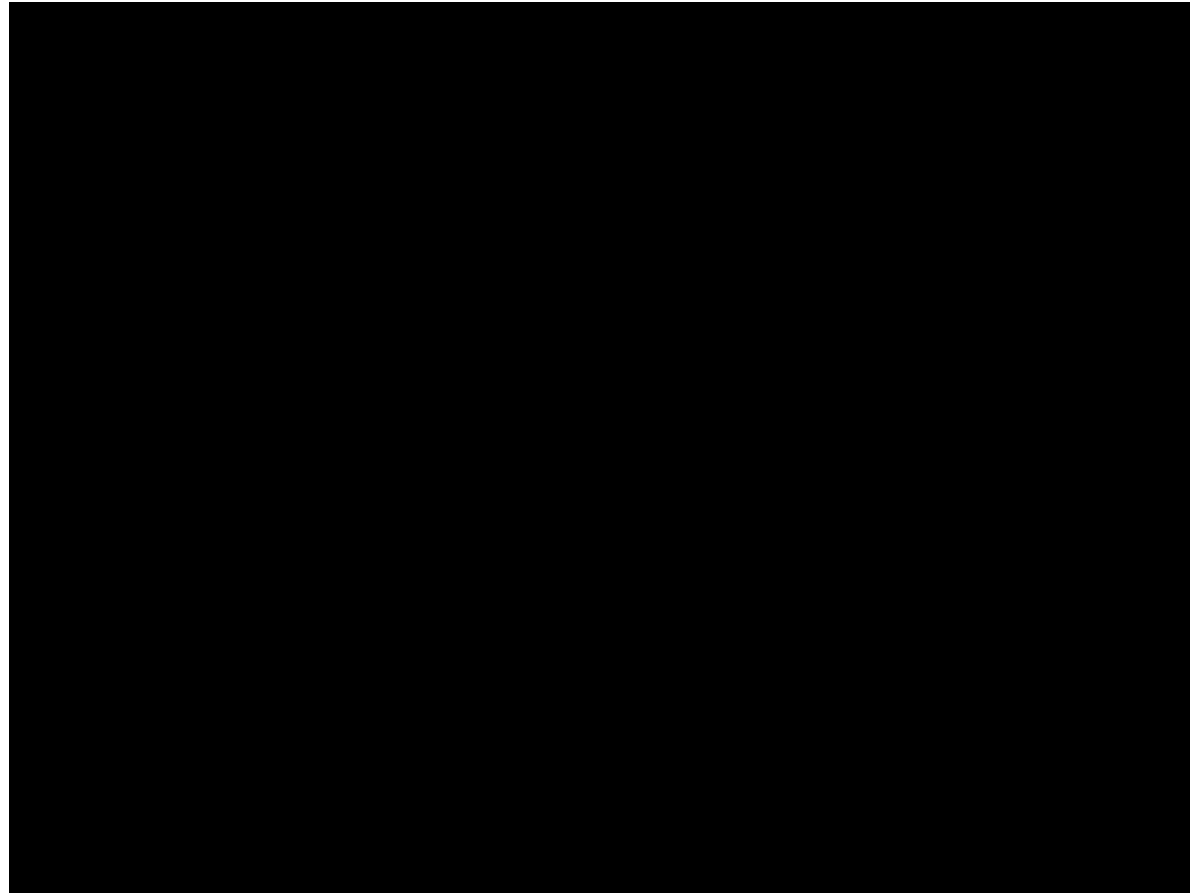
- One important and at the same time very special poet comes from the Greek community of Alexandria:

**Constantine Cavafy.**



K. CAVAFY, Ithaca

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# PROSE 1880-1922

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- The prose is also renewed. The writers, influenced by Realism, turn now to the novel of manners.

- The most famous writers are **Georgios Vizyinos** and

**Alexandros**

- **Papadiamantis.**



## A. PAPADIAMANTIS, The murderer

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G. VIZYINOS, The only journey of his life (το  
*μόνον της ζωής του ταξίδιον* )

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## 1922-1930

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- Greece faces the Asia Minor catastrophe. Hundreds of thousands of refugees are uprooted from their birth place and arrive in Greece.



# ASIA MINOR CATASTROPHE

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*Refugees from  
Smyrna*

*Rempart Vitouri, in Herakleion*

## 1922-1930

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- The main feature in this period's poetry is pessimism and a tendency to escape from a reality that hurts. The most famous poet of this generation is **Kostas Karyotakis**.



## K. KARYOTAKIS, Imaginary Suicides

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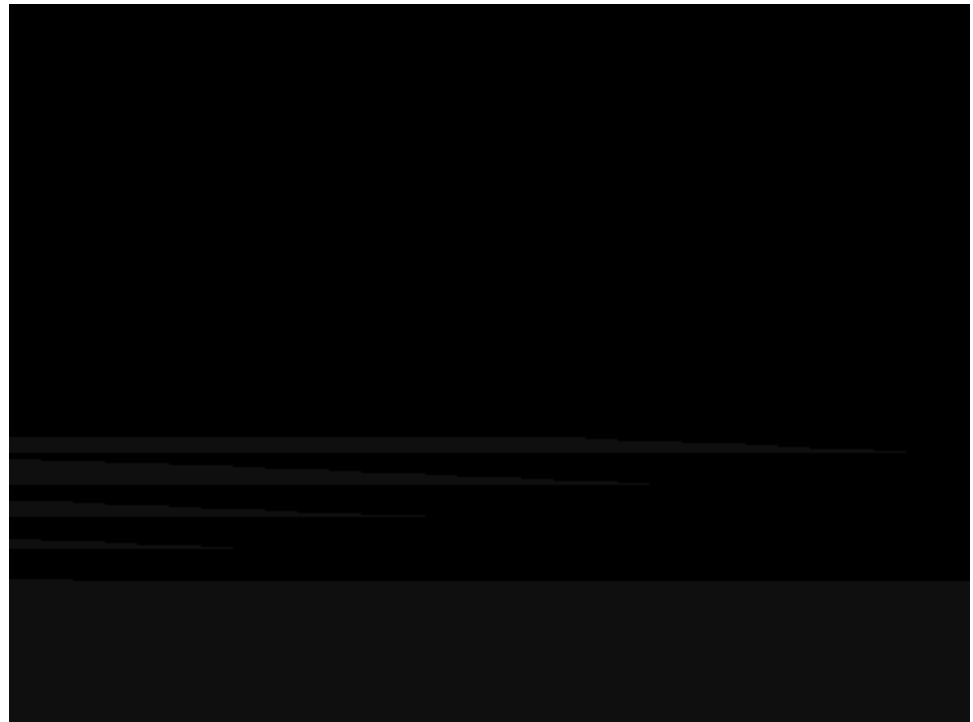
They turn the key in the door, take out  
their old, well-hidden letters,  
read them quietly, then drag  
their feet a final time.

Their life has been a tragedy, they say.  
God! people's frightful laughter,  
and the tears, the sweat, nostalgia  
of the skies, the landscape's solitude.

They stand there by the window, gazing at  
the trees, the children, all of nature,  
at the marble-workers hammering away,  
the sun that wants to set forever.

It's over. Here's the note --  
appropriately short, profound, and  
simple,  
full of indifference and forgiveness  
for whoever's going to weep and read it.

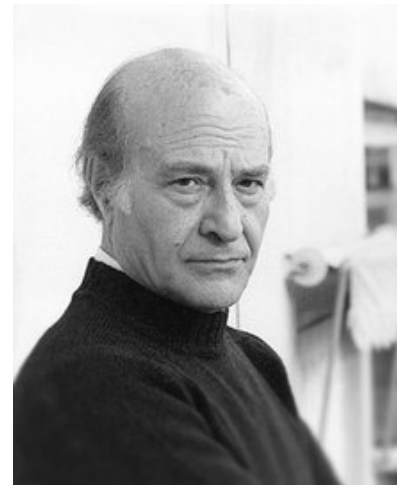
They look in the mirror, look at the time,  
ask if it's madness maybe, a mistake.  
"It's over now" they murmur;  
deep down, of course, they're going to put it off.



# THE GENERATION OF 1930

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- The generation of 1930 is influenced by a new movement, the Surrealism.
- The Surrealists, armed with imagination and dream, create a new poetic reality, where the imaginary, the dream, the sensations and the colours predominate.
- In this generation belong top Greek poets, like G. Seferis and O. Elytis.



G. SEPPHERIS (Nobel Prize in Literature 1963.) His work  
refers to the passions of Greeks.

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### **Denial**

On the secret seashore  
white like a pigeon  
we thirsted at noon;  
but the water was brackish.

On the golden sand  
we wrote her name;  
but the sea-breeze blew  
and the writing vanished.

With what spirit, what heart,  
what desire and passion  
we lived our life: a mistake!  
So we changed our life..



# G. SEPHERIS (Nobel Prize in Literature 1963.) His work refers to the passions of Greeks.

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## Helen

Lyric nightingale,  
on a night like this, by the shore of Proteus,  
the Spartan slave-girls heard you and began  
their lament,  
and among them — who would have believed  
it? — Helen!

She whom we hunted so many years by the  
banks of the Scamander.

She was there, at the desert's lip; I touched  
her; she spoke to me:

'It isn't true, it isn't true,' she cried.

'I didn't board the blue bowed ship.

I never went to valiant Troy.'

Breasts girded high, the sun in her hair, and  
that stature

shadows and smiles everywhere,

on shoulders, thighs and knees;

the skin alive, and her eyes

with the large eyelids,

she was there, on the banks of a Delta.

And at Troy?

At Troy, nothing: just a phantom image.

That's how the gods wanted it.

And Paris, Paris lay with a shadow as though it  
were a solid being;

and for ten whole years we slaughtered ourselves  
for Helen.



OD. ELYTIS (Nobel Prize in Literature 1979).

His work is influenced by the Greek landscape and the Greek tradition

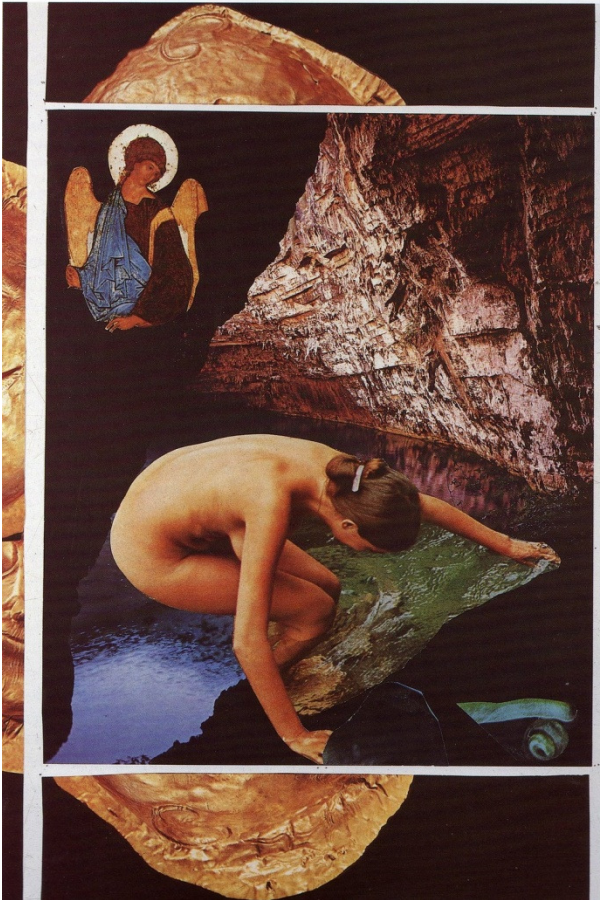
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### **Beautiful and Strange Homeland**

A beautiful and strange country  
like the one that luck gave me, I 've never  
seen  
He throws the net to catch fish. he catches  
birds,  
he sets a boat on the ground, a garden in  
the water,  
he cries, kisses the dirt, migrates,  
ends up by himself, he becomes a man  
A beautiful and strange country  
like the one that luck gave me, I 've never  
seen  
He tries to grab a stone, he throws it away  
he tries to poke in it, he makes miracles  
he takes a little boat, he reaches the oceans  
he asks for a revolution, he asks for tyrants  
A beautiful and strange country  
like the one that luck gave me, I 've never  
seen



# ODYSSEUS ELYTIS (collage)



*In the sea cave*



*Lion of the Sea*



G. RITSOS. He puts his work in the service of a revolution for a world of justice.

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## Moonlight Sonata



N. ENGONOPOULOS. He serves surrealism both in painting and poetry.

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*The civil War*

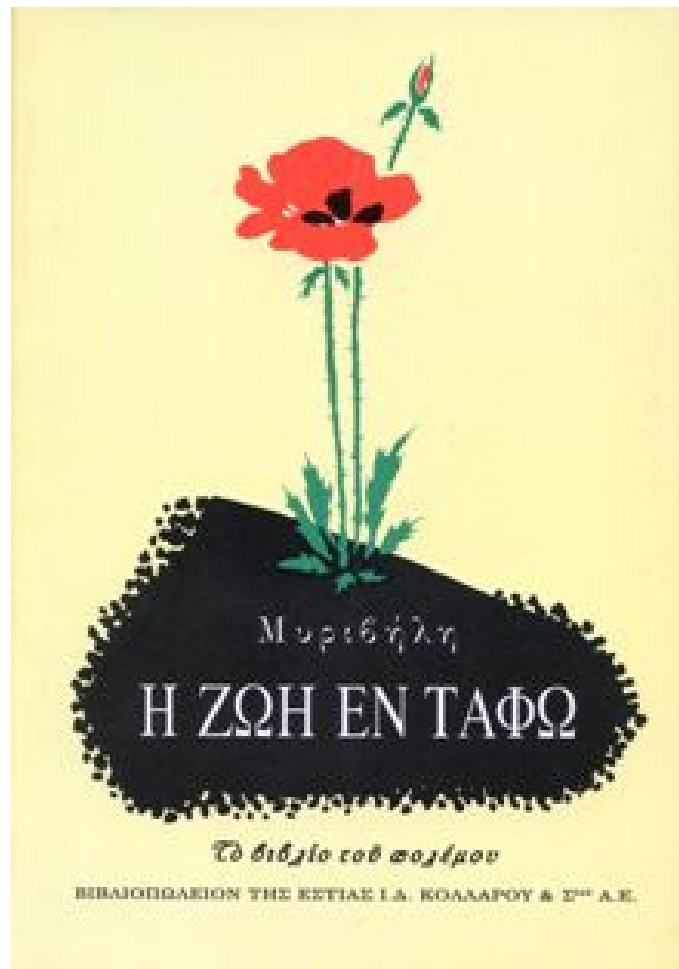


*Orpheus and Eurydice*

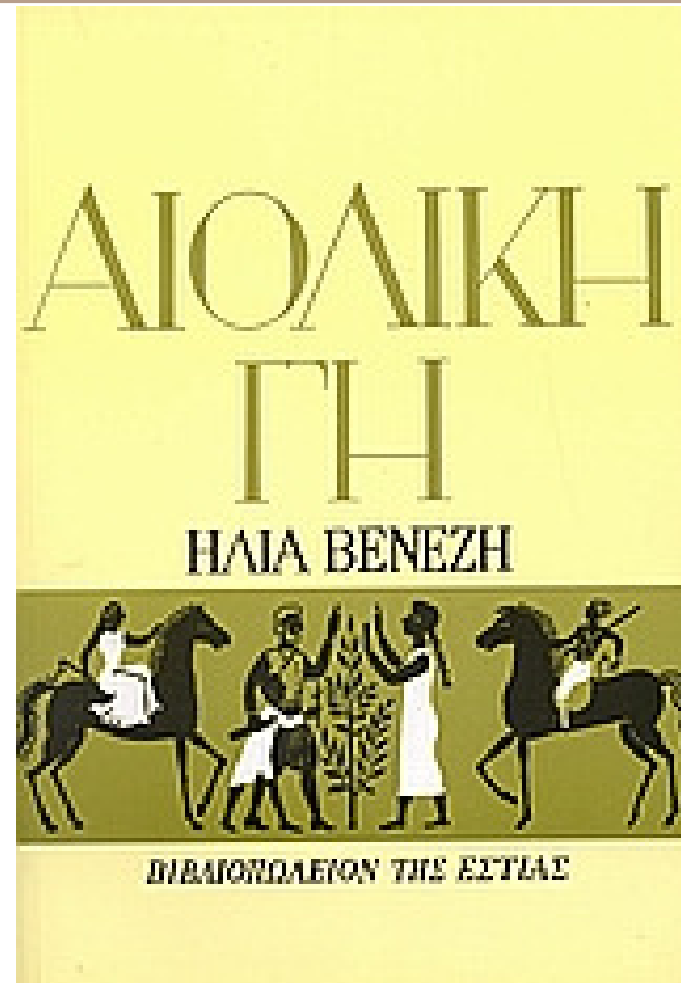
# PROSE

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- New authors appear coming from Asia Minor, like **Stratis Myrivilis, Elias Venezis, Photis Kontoglou, Stratis Doukas**
- These writers stay close to tradition and are inspired mainly by their place of origin.



*STRATIS MYRIVILIS, Life in the Tomb (Η ζωή εν τάφω)*



*ELIAS VENEZIS, Aeolia (Αιολική γη)*

# Greece faces World War II, the German Occupation and the civil war.

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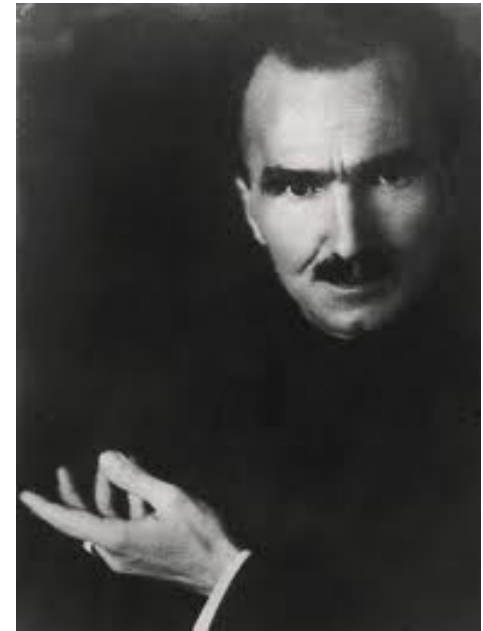
Σε μια τή μάχη των ελληνικών μαζών η διαταγή  
της τή μάχη των ελληνικών μαζών με τή διαταγή  
και με τή μάχη των ελληνικών μαζών

της. Ένας: διαταγή των ΑΕΕ. Αλεξανδρική με τή  
κατάλληλη τή μάχη των ελληνικών μαζών (Αθήνα, Ελλάδα) αλεξανδρική  
Αλεξανδρική.

# GREECE 1940-1949

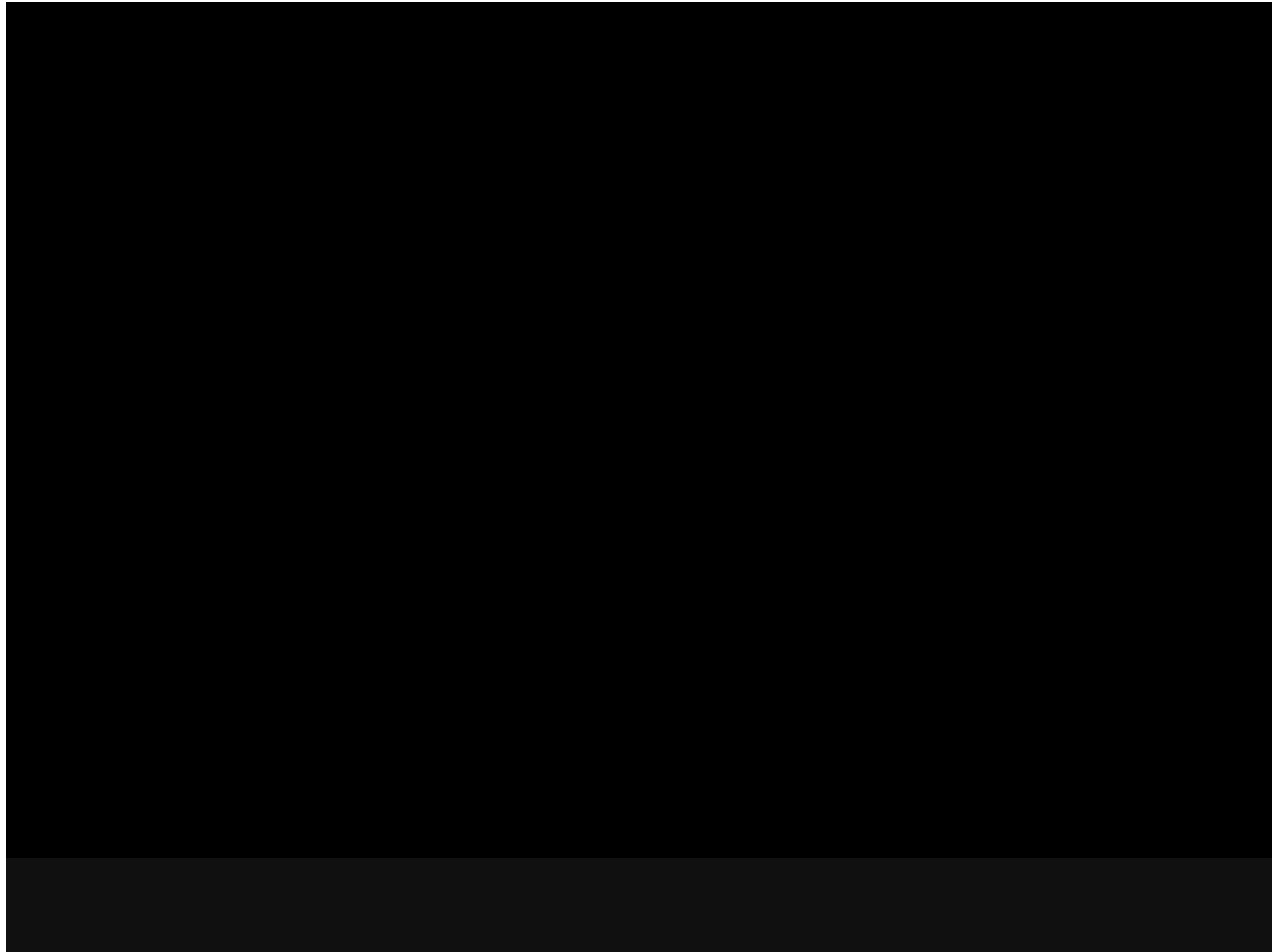
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- The authors of this period are inspired by the historical reality, while at the same time an important figure of Greek literature makes his appearance, **Nikos Kazantzakis**.



N. KAZANTZAKIS, Askitiki

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# POSTWAR POETRY

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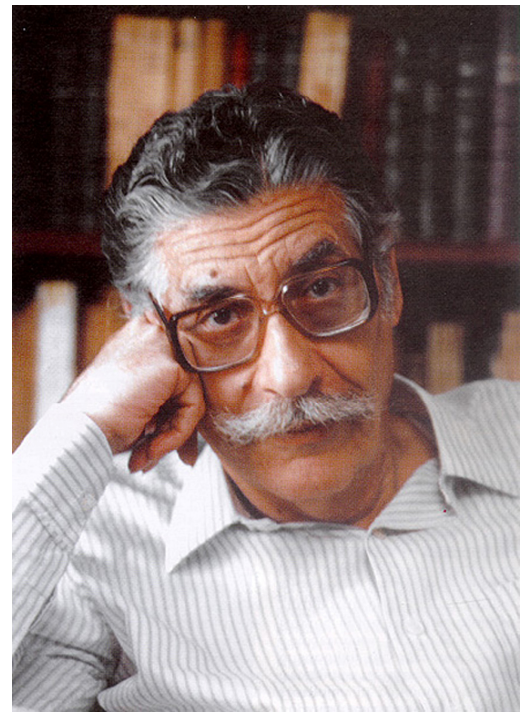
- In this generation, three trends emerge:

- **Resistance or social** poetry,

by poets with intense

political activity,

like **Manolis Anagnostakis**.

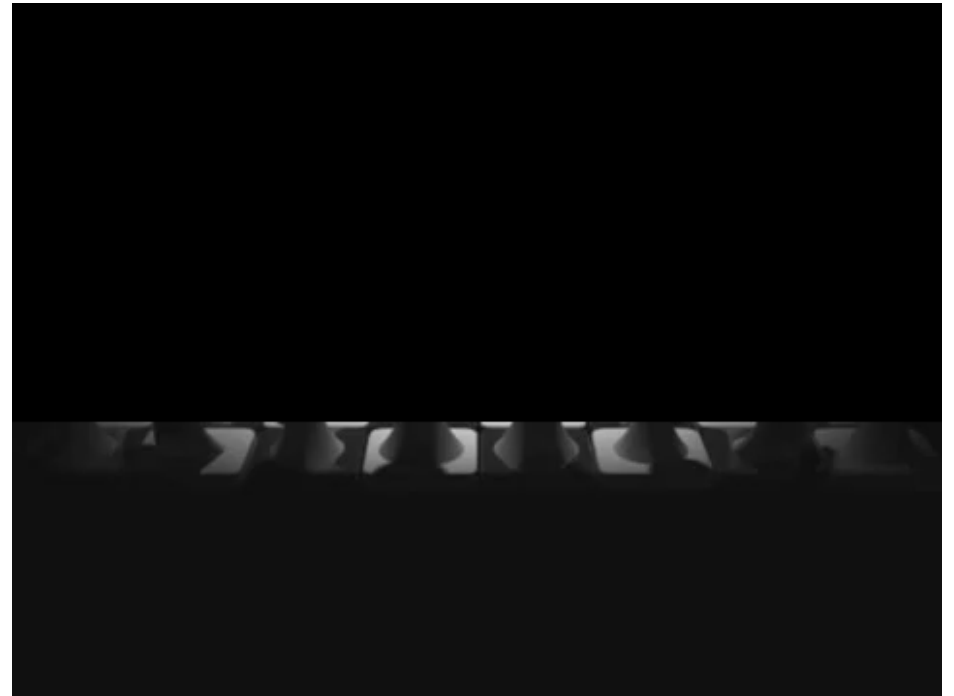




# M. ANAGNOSTAKIS, The Chess (Το σκάκι)

---

Come, let's play.  
You can have my queen  
(Once she was my beloved  
But now I have no beloved)  
You can have my castles  
(Now I refrain from firing at my friends  
They died long before me)  
And this King was never mine  
And then, what do I want with so many  
soldiers?  
(They march blindly and even dreamless)  
You can have everything, even my knights  
I'll just keep this crazy bishop of mine  
Who knows how to advance on one colour  
only  
Striding from corner to corner  
Laughing at all your many panoplies  
Trusting his way into your lines  
Creating havoc in your camp.  
And there's no end to this game.



# Surrealistic Poetry, by poets who resort to the imaginary, like **Miltos Sachtouris**.

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MILTOS SACHTOURIS, The soldier (Ο στρατιώτης ποιητής)



I have written no poems  
in thuds  
in thuds  
my life rolled

One day I trembled  
the next day I shuddered  
in fear  
in fear  
my life passed

I have written no poems  
I have written no poems  
I just nail  
crosses  
on graves

**Existential poetry**, by poets who turn to personal experiences and the search regarding life and death.

---

## KIKI DIMOULA, The Plural (Πληθυντικός αριθμός )

*Love,*  
*name substantive,*  
*a lot of substantive,*  
*singular number,*  
*gender of neither female neither male,*  
*gender defenceless.*

*Plural number*  
*the defenceless loves.*

*The fear,*  
*name substantive,*  
*in the beginning singular number*  
*and afterwards plural:*  
*the fears.*

*The fears*  
*for all from I see and beyond.*

*Memory,*  
*main name of sadnesses,*  
*singular number,*  
*only singular number*

*The memory, the memory, the memory.*

*The night,*  
*name substantive,*  
*gender female,*  
*singular number.*

*Plural number*  
*the nights.*

*The nights from I see and beyond.*



# POSTWAR LITERATURE

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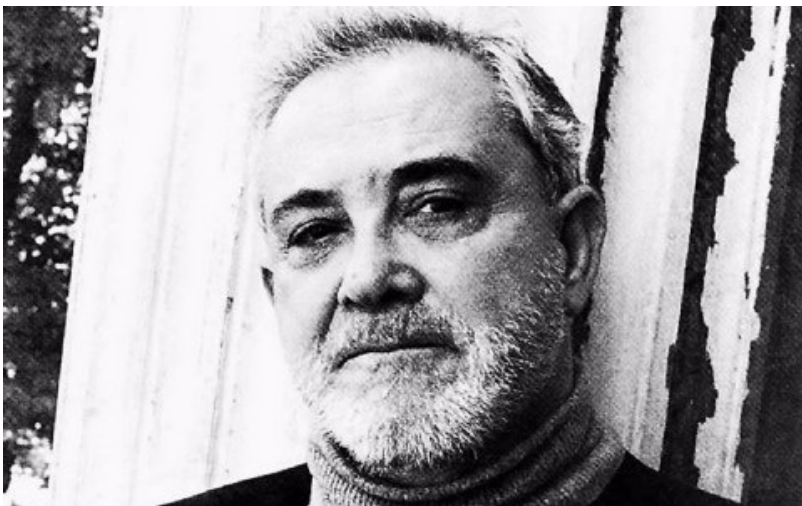
- Some writers are inspired by the experiences of the Second World War, the Occupation and the Civil War in novels like **The Siege** (*Πολιορκία*) of **Alexandros Kotzias**, **The Pyramide 67** (*Πυραμίδα 67*) of **Renos Apostolides** and **The Drifting cities** (*Ακυβέρνητες πολιτείες*) of **Stratis Tsirkas**.

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# POSTWAR LITERATURE

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- Another topic of postwar literature is everyday life and life in the city, which is brought forward by novelists like **Kostas Tachtses, Giorgos Ioannou, Menis Koumantareas.**



# POSTWAR LITERATURE

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- Some writers face with criticism and skepticism the actual economic, social and political reality, like **Spyros Plaskovitis** in *The Dam*, **Vasilis Vasilikos** in his *Trilogy* or **Antonis Samarakis** in *The Flaw*.





*ANTONIS SAMARAKIS,  
The Flaw (Το λάθος)*



*SPYROS PLASKOVITIS,  
The Dam (Το φράγμα)*



ΟΙ ΔΡΟΜΟΙ ΤΗΣ ΓΝΩΣΗΣ



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